

Message Text

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SUBJECT:OPIUM BAN NEWS ITEM

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, MAY 8,
1974:

QUOTE: OPIUM AGAIN HURTS U.S.-TURKISH LINKS

AMERICANS IN ANKARA EXPECT PROBLEMS WITH RENEWAL OF
PRODUCTION OF POPPIES

BY STEVEN V. ROBERTS. ANKARA, TURKEY -- AMERICAN DIPLOMATS
HERE ARE WORRIED THAT THE TURKISH DECISION TO RESUME CULTI-
VATION OF OPIUM POPPIES MAY SERIOUSLY IMPAIR RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND TURKEY, ALLIES IN NATO.

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AS ONE PUT IT: "IF THEY START GROWING POPPIES AGAIN, AND

CONGRESS CUTS OFF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID, AND TURKEY DOES SOMETHING ELSE, THERE WILL BE NO STOPPING IT. THE CHAIN OF EVENTS COULD GET TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL."

TURKEY BANNED CULTIVATION OF POPPIES TWO YEARS AGO UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE UNITED STATES. AT THE TIME IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT 80 PER CENT OF THE HEROIN REACHING AMERICA STARTED AS TURKISH OPIUM. IT WAS CONVERTED HERE INTO BASE MORPHINE, AND THEN SMUGGLED TO FRANCE WHERE IT WAS MADE INTO HEROIN.

IN EXCHANGE FOR THE BAN, WASHINGTON PROMISED TURKEY DOLS. 35 MILLION - 15 MILLION TO COMPENSATE FARMERS 2 AND DOLS. 20 MILLION FOR LONG-RANGE PROGRAMS TO CREATE NEW SOURCES OF INCOME.

IN MARCH, HOWEVER, PREMIER BULENT ECEVIT AUTHORIZED THE PLANTING OF A SEED CROP ON STATE FARMS. ANKARA SAYS NO FURTHER DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT MOST POLITICIANS HERE EXPECT THE GOVERNMENT TO LICENCE WIDESPREAD CULTIVATION NEXT FALL.

STRAINED TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS WERE NOT IMPROVED RECENTLY WHEN TWO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, LESTER L. WOLFF AND CHARLES B. RANGEL, FLEW HERE TO INVESTIGATE MATTERS FIRST HAND. BEFORE THEY LEFT WASHINGTON, THE TWO NEW YORK DEMOCRATS WERE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT IF THE BAN WAS LIFTED, THEY WOULD URGE CONGRESS TO CUT OFF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO TURKEY.

THE TURKS HAVE BEEN FURIOUS EVER SINCE. THEY POINT OUT THAT MILITARY AID IS NOT A "GIFT" BUT PART OF "MUTUAL DEFENSE" EFFORTS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION. THE TWO COUNTRIES MAINTAIN SEVERAL IMPORTANT AIR BASES AND COMMUNICATION CENTERS UNDER JOINT COMMAND HERE, AND THE TURKS CONTEND THAT AMERICAN INTERESTS WOULD ALSO BE HURT BY ANY CONGRESSIONAL RETRIBUTION.

MORE IMPORTANT, THE WHOLE MATTER HAS BECOME ONE OF NATIONAL PRIDE. FOREIGN MINISTER TURAN GUNES SAID IN AN INTERVIEW:
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"I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT TURKEY WILL TAKE THIS DECISION ALONE. THREATS OF RECIPROCAL MEASURES WHICH ARE BEING FLOATED BY IRRESPONSIBLE PARTIES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED."

AN INSULT TO HONOR

THERE ARE MANY COMPLEX REASONS FOR TURKEY'S MOVE TO RESUME

CULTIVATION. MR. GUNES SAID THAT ABOUT 100,000 FARMERS WHOSE "WAY OF LIFE" WAS BASED ON OPIUM "HAVE UNDERGONE SEVERE POVERTY." MOREOVER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID, ACCEPTING AID FROM THE UNITED STATES TO KEEP THE BAN IS A FORM OF "BEGGARSHIP" THAT INSULTS NATIONAL HONOR.

AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS REPLY THAT THE FARMERS NEVER MADE MUCH MONEY SELLING OPIUM LEGALLY, AND WOULD BE BETTER OFF IN THE LONG RUN PLANTING WHEAT OR RAISING LIVESTOCK. THE AMERICANS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT PROGRAMS TO HELP THE FARMERS HAVE STALLED BADLY, BUT THEY BLAME THE TURKISH BUREAUCRATS WHO ARE RUNNING THEM.

TURKISH OFFICIALS SAY THAT THE BAN HERE HELPED CAUSE A WORLDWIDE SHORTAGE OF OPIUM FOR LEGITIMATE MEDICINAL PURPOSES, AND THAT INDIA HAS BEEN ENCOURAGED TO INCREASE PRODUCTION TO FILL THE GAP. THIS SITUATION, THE OFFICIALS SAY, IS UNFAIR AND UNACCEPTABLE.

THE SITUATION HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLY AGGRAVATED BY RUMORS-- RECENTLY CONFIRMED IN WASHINGTON -- THAT THE UNITED STATES IS CONSIDERING THE GROWING OF ITS OWN OPIUM POPPIES FOR MEDICINAL USE.

AMERICAN DIPLOMATS CONCEDE THEY ARE IN A DELICATE POSITION BECAUSE OF THE SHORTAGE. BUT THEY PLAINLY BELIEVE THAT INDIA CAN CONTROL SMUGGLING AND THAT TURKEY CANNOT. THE TURKS INSIST THEY WILL APPLY STRICT AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES, BUT THERE ARE REPORTS THAT OPIUM HAS BEEN GROWN DURING THE BAN IN REMOTE MOUNTAIN FIELDS, PROTECTED BY ARMED GUARDS.

A KNOWLEDGEABLE AMERICAN COMMENTED: "THE DIFFICULTY IS UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT THE MONEY TO BE MADE IS SO GREAT THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS BRIBE SOME LOCAL OFFICIAL."

IN ADDITION, THE TURKS HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT ADDICT POPULATION, AND THEY CONSIDER THE DRUG PROBLEM IN AMERICA TO BE A SIGN OF MORAL WEAKNESS. SAID ANOTHER AMERICAN, "THEY JUST CAN'T IDENTIFY WITH IT."

PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN TURKEY'S DECISION IS THE ONE FELT IN MANY SMALLER NATIONS -- THE DESIRE TO BE "INDEPENDENT OF THE BIG POWERS, TO FEEL, AS ONE FOREIGN DIPLOMAT PUT IT, "THAT THEY ARE MASTERS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY."

AN AMERICAN EXPLAINED IT THIS WAY: "IT'S THAT WAY ANY-

WHERE WE'VE HELPED PEOPLE. THE TURKS ARE AN EXTREMELY PROUD PEOPLE AND THEY DON'T WANT ANYBODY PUSHING THEM AROUND. JUST BECAUSE WE'VE GIVEN THEM HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, THEY DON'T FEEL WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO TELL THEM WHAT TO DO. AND THEY'RE RIGHT, WE DON'T." RUSH

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